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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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27 March 1967

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Communist forces in northernmost Quang Tri Province inflicted at least 65 American casualties in attacks on US positions west of Quang Tri city on 27 March.

Press reports indicate that the Armed Forces Congress ratified the South Vietnamese constitution without any changes today.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Communist military activity continues in northern Quang Tri Province (Paras. 1-3). Elements of the 272nd and 273rd Viet Cong Regiments were involved in the recent large-scale attacks against US forces of Operation JUNCTION CITY (Paras. 4-5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Armed Forces Congress--a 45-man military group which theoretically serves as the government's source of power--reportedly ratified the constitution without any changes today (Paras. 1-2).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
Poststrike photography shows the damage to the Thai Nguyen Steel Plant from the first two strikes (Paras. 1-3).

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments:

[REDACTED]

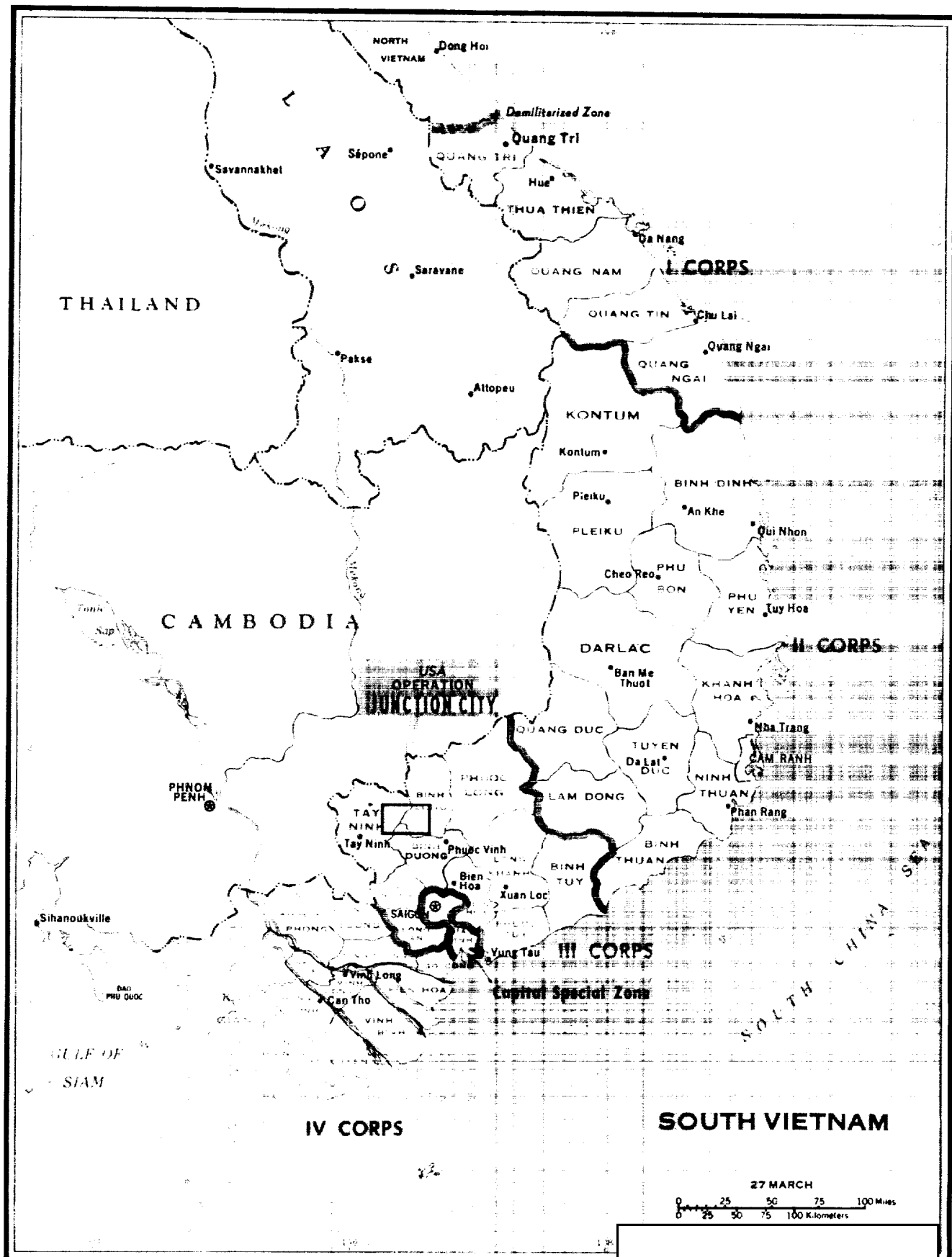
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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A Hanoi spokesman has rejected the latest U Thant peace proposal (Paras. 3-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The recently intensified Communist military activity south of the DMZ continues. Following a series of sharp clashes over the past weekend, US Marine positions in several areas west of Quang Tri city were attacked on 27 March, resulting in at least 65 American casualties. Enemy losses are unknown.

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2. This increasing pressure against American forces in northern Quang Tri Province may be designed to tie down larger numbers of US troops, drawing them away from other activities in the northern provinces. The possibility of a full-scale assault against allied positions in northern Quang Tri Province cannot be ruled out, although it still seems unlikely.

3. Infiltration of men and supplies has been continuing in western Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. This may be another reason for the enemy's increased aggressiveness in the coastal flatlands of eastern Quang Tri Province.

Two VC Regiments Involved in JUNCTION CITY

4. Information derived from captured documents and from prisoners taken last week in Tay Ninh and Binh Duong provinces verified previous information that the 272nd and two battalions of the 273rd Viet Cong regiments were involved in the two regimental-size attacks against US forces of Operation JUNCTION CITY. Nearly 850 enemy soldiers were killed in these two attacks which would render major elements of both these units combat ineffective.

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However, the redeployment of the 20-battalion search-and-destroy operation to the east may have put the American troops in such a position that the Communists were forced to attack to protect sensitive base and/or logistical areas.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Armed Forces Congress ratified the constitution in Saigon today without any changes, according to the press. A communiqué issued at the conclusion of the meeting stated that the constitution will be promulgated on 1 April, and that national elections will be held between 1 September and 1 October. The communiqué also expressed confidence in the ability of the ruling Directorate to maintain stability during the transition process. There is no indication that the congress considered the question of selecting a military candidate for president.

2. The ratification of the constitution by the congress without changes was generally expected, despite the strong reservations of some military figures to various constitutional provisions. One press report, however, quoted an informant who declared that two votes were necessary in today's meeting before the constitution was approved as written.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. The Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Combine--North Vietnam's largest industrial installation and only steel mill--has been bombed six times since 10 March. The first two strikes on 10 and 11 March were major efforts involving 36 and 40 US Air Force aircraft respectively. The other four strikes were conducted at night by up to six of the Navy's all-weather A-6A attack bombers making radar-guided bombing runs.

2. Bomb damage assessment photography is available for only the first two strikes against Thai Nguyen. The photos show slight to moderate damage to the open hearth building and to the rolling mill, neither of which had been completed. It is estimated that this damage can be repaired in three months. No damage to the plant's pig iron and coke producing facilities was noted and there was only slight damage to the fabrication shops assembling steel products.

3. Difficulties in obtaining additional damage assessment photography are attributable mostly to the very poor weather which has been prevalent over North Vietnam in the last two weeks. Photo coverage of Thai Nguyen and major thermal power plants struck in recent weeks remains a matter of high priority.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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3. A North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman has once again stated that Hanoi is not interested in any peace proposal which calls for a preliminary mutual cease-fire. In a radiobroadcast on 27 March, North Vietnam referred to UN Secretary General Thant's latest proposal as unsatisfactory because it fails to make the proper distinction between the "aggressor and the victim" and because such a proposal demands that Hanoi accept the conditions laid down by "the aggressor."

4. The Hanoi report also quoted a UN information service bulletin out of New Delhi to the effect that U Thant had stated that Hanoi is holding out the possibility of reciprocity if the US is willing to withdraw its support of Saigon. The Hanoi spokesman declared that this report does "not tally with reality" and is "contrary to the views of the government of the DRV."

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5. As in the past, Hanoi was careful not to attack U Thant personally. It quoted a UN information service report and Western press sources for U Thant's proposal and directed Hanoi's rebuttal at those sources rather than at the Secretary General himself.

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